

Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative

When I pulled up to the historic street of Pennsylvania Avenue I was disappointed at how depressing the buildings looked. Lines and rows of boxes with windows on both sides of the road. I thought to myself, for the capital of a country that is viewed by the world as a mixing-bowl of culture and people, you would think we would have more to offer than brick walls and street lights. I drove up and down the street without having to yell at another car because there were no other cars, which in DC had the eerie feeling of a post apocalyptic movie scene.

I must admit that the silence of the street was a calming change from the typical DC I've known my whole life. However, if the calmness of the street is its greatest resource, besides the attractions that come with the White House, the businesses must be struggling to stay alive in such an expensive area. Which cannot be good for Pennsylvania Avenue and the few people who rely on its livelihood.



The significance of this street is the reason why it's important to have it come alive and attract more people. In many ways Pennsylvania Avenue is a symbol of our country's long history. That being said, isn't it our duty to restore the street and bring it back to life with some color, culture and craft.

As said earlier, the blandness of the street immediately set in a dispiriting vibe. Every building looked as if it were a copy of a copy of a copy. A brown blur of brick and reflected sky from the windows. Would it hurt to add some color to the mix? Maybe have local artists be allowed to paint murals on the walls like they do in Richmond, Virginia. This could bring in an artistic vibe allowing more culture to be expressed rather than the sterile feel that has plagued street.



Furthermore, along the streets I saw very few restaurants, majority of the few being cafes. Personally, I prefer sit-down restaurants because they allow me to enjoy my dining experience. Yet while I was driving up and down the street I only saw carryout Chinese food and a small café. There was no place that made me want to stay on Pennsylvania Avenue for longer than the time it took to drive down it. So if possible, creating more incentives for local grown restaurants to form might bring in more traffic to the street. I certainly would have stayed longer if I saw a nice restaurant.

Lastly, going up and down the street I could never tell where work ended and residential life began. It's quite possible that all the buildings were business related but there were many that just looked abandoned. If this street really wishes to be redeemed it's going to need to attract

human capital. Perhaps formulating a quota for housing on the street. Raising this quota would attract apartment developers since living in DC, especially on Pennsylvania Avenue, is expensive and desired by most who wish to exterminate their daily commute. More housing would help increase the amount of foot traffic and maybe even allow for more small businesses like restaurants to survive.

